

THE MINOR MANORS OF
NEW YORK

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NEW YORK

ADDRESS PREPARED FOR
THE NEW YORK BRANCH

OF

THE ORDER OF COLONIAL LORDS
OF MANORS IN AMERICA

BY

JOHN HENRY LIVINGSTON

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OLD BILLOPP HOUSE, TOTTENVILLE

See page 16

THE MINOR MANORS OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK

Ladies and Gentlemen:

In addition to the well known Manors which have been presented to us in many interesting addresses, it seems proper for us to consider briefly those Manors which ceased to exist shortly after their respective grants were made. These were the Fordham, the Sophy, the Fox Hall, the Cassiltown, the Bentley and the Fletcher Manors.

THE MANOR OF FORDHAM

This Manor, situated in Westchester County, N. Y., was granted to John Archer of Fordham November 13, 1671, by Governor Francis Lovelace.

It appears, however, from an account given in Scharf's History of Westchester, that Archer, before obtaining his Manor grant, had mortgaged his property to Cornelis Steenwyck of New York, to whom the rents were made payable. Again in 1676 Archer made another mortgage of his property to Steenwyck, and although he had the privilege of redeeming it, he seems never to have done so. In the words of that eminent authority upon New York manors, Edward Hagaman Hall, Esq., L.H.D.

“Steenwyck evidently was recognized as proprietor in 1684, when he and his wife made their wills bequeathing their interest in the Manor to the Nether Dutch Reformed Church of New York. Steenwyck died soon afterwards and on Oct. 16, 1685, John Archer, son and heir of the first John Archer, executed a release of his interest in the Manor to the Widow Margareta Steenwyck. Margareta married Dominie Henricus Selyns, and on Jan. 10, 1694, they conveyed the Manor to the Dutch Church.”

Towards the end of a very interesting description of the Manor of Fordham, Dr. Hall adds, “In short, Fordham Manor does not appear to rank with Philipse Manor and the other great

Manors. The royal charter does not call it a 'lordship' like the charter of Philipse Manor, nor does it give the right to hold court leet and court baron like the Philipse charter."



J. Paine

THE SOPHY MANOR

This Manor was granted July 25, 1672, by Governor Francis Lovelace to John Paine, of whom and of whose Manor is given a full account in the work entitled "Paine Genealogy, Ipswich Branch" by Albert W. Paine of Bangor, Maine.

From this account we learn that the grantee, "John Paine, son of William, was born in England in 1632, and came to America with his father at the age of three years, and made a part of his father's family at Watertown and Ipswich. He married Sarah Parker, daughter of Richard Parker, in 1659, and took up his residence in Boston. The various enterprises, in which his father was engaged at death, he continued, and especially his mills at Watertown, Iron Works at Lynn, trade at Boston and Portsmouth, and that of the 'Free Adventurers' in Western Massachusetts. He was also interested in business at Ipswich, and at Dover and Exeter. He appears to have been a man of great business capacity and enterprise."

"Just prior to his father's death, the Legislature had, upon his and others' petition, ordered negotiations entered into with the Dutch government, for the purpose of securing the free navigation of the Hudson river, by Fort Aurania, and thence to the ocean. Soon after his father's death, John Paine appeared at New York for that purpose, as also to adjust the

“PRUDENCE ISLAND OR ‘SOPHY MANOR.’

southern boundary of the Colony. The Dutch having about that time been conquered at home, the result was that they evacuated New York, and of course the English succeeded to the right of free navigation, without conflict.”

The author of the Paine Genealogy then gives the following account of the granting of the Manor, but it must be borne in mind that there were two grants, one “Given under my Hand & Sealed with the Seale of the Province, at fforte James in New Yorke, this 25th day of July in the 24th Year of the Reigne of our Sovereigne Lord Charles the Second of England, Scotland, ffrance & Ireland, King, Defender of the ffaith &c: Annoq Domini 1672.

(Seal)

Francis Lovelace.”

and the other dated August 1, 1672, whereby were granted certain “Orders & Priveledges for y^e Welfare & Good Governm^t of Prudence Island.”

“While thus in New York, in 1671, he became intimately acquainted with Gov. Lovelace, who had just then, on the retirement of the Dutch, assumed the governorship of the Colony, under appointment from King Charles II., and was then engaged in the erection or ‘re-edifying’ of Fort James, situated ‘at the point of land formed by the Hudson river and the Sound.’ This was at the foot of Broadway, at or near the spot now known as ‘Bowling Green.’

“Previous to this time, as a wedding gift, his wife’s father, Richard Parker, had conveyed to Paine a tract of land containing about 700 acres at the north end of Prudence Island, situate in Narragansett bay, near Providence, R. I., which gave him an interest therein, and led to the following very romantic history. But for the indubitable proof of its accuracy, it might be regarded as a tale of fiction. The historian of Rhode Island briefly relates the leading facts, but the particulars and the identity of the principal actor have never before been fully established, though often attempted. A careful investigation, however, has brought out both the facts and the actor into full light.

“After the conveyance by Richard Parker to Paine as already mentioned, upon the occasion of his marriage, the latter had mortgaged the same lands to Samuel Appleton to secure the £1500 legacy made in his father’s will to the Appleton grandchildren, and still later he had also made a conveyance of the

same property in trust for the benefit of his own three daughters according to the verbal agreement made at the time of the wedding gift.

“The intimacy which grew up between Gov. Lovelace and Paine, led the latter to aid in the erection of the fort already mentioned, and also to its furnishing, by advancing the necessary means out of his own private resources. By this act of munificence, he so far won the favor of the Governor and the Duke of York, afterwards King James II., that a patent or ‘confirmation’ was made by them to him of the island named, to be held in fee as a Free Manor by the name of ‘Sophy Manor’ forever.

“The patent was made subject to the annual quit-rent of ‘two barrells of syder and six couple of capons.’ This was in August, 1672. The following week, Paine was made Governor of the island for life, with a council to be chosen from the inhabitants, and courts of limited jurisdiction and a regular constitution of government was ordained and promulgated for the people, one article of which asserted the principle of religious freedom, as then understood. On account of further payments made towards finishing the fort, he was released from the quit-rent and the island relieved from taxes. This latter was more particularly granted in consideration ‘that the said island lying so remote from any fortified place within the Duke’s territories, so that they cannot expect any sudden aid or relief, but must depend upon their own capacities, as well relating to men, as all other warlike provisions for their defense against foreign invasions, or disturbance by the natives at home.’ The island was thus held by him in fee and as an absolutely independent state, the smallest in America, being about six miles long and one broad. His commission as Governor for life was soon after confirmed.

“The ‘Patent’ and ‘Commission’ thus granted are now on file in manuscript in the Capitol at Albany. Their curious and interesting character renders their publication here, from copies obtained for the purpose, as peculiarly appropriate, and important to a full understanding of the history.”

After reciting in full the two above named grants, which are too long to be included in this address, the author continues as follows:

“His (John Paine’s) authority and government were, however, of short continuance. His grant was alleged to conflict

with a previous one made by the celebrated Indian Chief Canonicus, in 1638. to Roger Williams and Gov. Winthrop, and his effort to exercise authority aroused the spirit of the Colony. He was at once arrested and thrown into prison, but released on bail. At the court of Trials he was indicted under the law of 1658 for unlawfully attempting to bring in a foreign jurisdiction, or for 'intrusion,' for setting up a new government within the limits of a former one, without due authority. In this emergency he appealed to the Governor, but he had no power to stay the proceedings, and John Paine was put on trial before the jury. He argued his own case in writing, but it was unavailing, and he was found guilty. Here the matter stopped, he retiring from the conflict, surrendering his position and claim, and nothing further was done in the matter."

After introducing a copy of this argument, the author then states that "Mr. Paine is related to have died at sea in 1675. On Dec. 29, 1674, he made a deed, and the Legislative resolve making him a grant of land already alluded to, was passed in May following. He probably died soon after. His wife had died before him, as had probably also his three daughters, or at least we have no information concerning them after the trust deed mentioned made for their benefit in 1669. It is quite apparent, that before his death, he had been unfortunate in business and lost his property, though there is no certainty that it was so. He left no will and no administration was taken out on his estate. The only entry in Probate is, that 'Oct. 31, 1676, Richard Knight was empowered to administer upon the estate of John Paine deceased.' He had four children:

"79. *William*, born March 15, 1664.

"80. *Sarah*.

"81. *Hannah*.

"82. *Anna*.

"COAT OF ARMS

"It has already been mentioned in a previous part of this work, (Page 33), that both, John Paine now spoken of, and his father, used the Coat of Arms known as 'The Arms of Payne, of Market Bosworth, County of Leicester, and of the County of Suffolk,' thus showing the identity of their lineage with that of the Leicester and Suffolk family, and as probable successors of Hugh de Payen of Templar fame. The proof of this fact

properly finds a place at this point of their history. That the father did so use it, is evidenced by the 'Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society,' among which are preserved his genuine signature and seal; copies of which are given in 'VOL. VII., FOURTH SERIES,' on page VIII., of '*Fac Similes of Signatures and Seals*,' as published by that society.

"That John Paine, the son, so used it, is also evidenced by Arnold's History of Rhode Island, and also by the *Heraldic Journal*, but more certainly by the fact, that the documents or letters already described, as now existing in the State House at Albany, written by him in connection with the Prudence Island business, contain both his signature and seal in at least three different instances. As used by him, the seal has the added item of a helmet introduced between the shield and the crest. From one of these papers, the following engraving of a photograph copy of both seal and signature has been executed."¹

FOX HALL MANOR

This Manor was granted by Governor Francis Lovelace October 16, 1672, to Captain (afterwards Major) Thomas Chambers.

A full account of "The Erection of Foxhall Manor" is given in the magazine formerly published at Kingston, N. Y. (now no longer in publication) called "Old^E Vlster" in Volume II, No. 4, for April 1906, as follows.

"OLD^E VLSTER

VOL. II

APRIL, 1906

No. 4

"The Erection of Foxhall Manor

Having allotted lands to the disbanded soldiers along the Esopus, with a special tract to the widow of Captain Brodhead 'in regard to her great charge, and her being a commissioned officer's widow,' the Esopus was formally proclaimed to be subject hereafter to 'the Duke's Laws,' already provided for the government of Long Island. These provided an annual court to meet once a year in the City of New York, although the governor and council might proclaim an *oyer and terminer* for the trial of capital cases at other times. It provided for inferior courts three times a year in every riding throughout the province, with jury trials, and local courts in every town. Lands were to be held under the Duke of York, and all persons were

¹ See cut at the head of the account of "The Sophy Manor"

required to bring their old grants and take out new patents from Governor Nicolls. No land purchases from Indians were to be valid without the governor's consent, which could not be obtained until the Indians who sold the land appeared in person before commissioners from the governor and acknowledged that they had been satisfied. No sale or barter with the savage in furs, fire-arms, ammunition or strong drink was allowed without a license from the governor.

“The free and tolerant exercise of religious worship enjoyed under the Dutch was continued; slavery was recognized, and its abuse guarded against; an enrollment of the militia above the age of sixteen made, and stocks and a pillory were ordered to be set up in every town.

“The lands so far undivided at Hurley and Marbletown, amounting to some seven hundred acres, were laid out into thirty acre lots. Here were the disbanded soldiers' lands (See Vol. I, Page 264). Marbletown became a village of fifty houses, mostly built of logs, and largely the homes of those who had been in the military service. In process of time the village houses were abandoned as the villagers erected better dwellings upon their several farms, and the village of Marbletown became but a memory while it grew to be the name of the region between the great Rochester patent and Hurley and Kingston.

“No colonial governor of New York could quietly administer its affairs without keeping an eye upon the French in Canada. Before one hundred years were to elapse a mighty struggle between Great Britain and France was to decide the fate of this continent, and during all these years the executive of New York was to be alert. The summonings to military service against the French were frequent but actual service was rare. The Indians of the Hudson were of Algonquin stock, and kin to the allies of the French. The whites of the Esopus were still too weak to allow the stockades to be dismantled, and renewed alarms from the Canadian Indians led to an order in 1671 to rebuild the old palisaded stockade of a dozen years before. It was reconstructed and strengthened, and was now three hundred and seventy-nine and one-half rods long,—more than a mile in circuit. Hurley and Marbletown built block-houses (See Vol. II, Page 60).

“But no troubles with the French arose on this occasion. The Dutch, and their successors the English, had powerful allies in the Iroquois, who kept the French sufficiently employed to have them leave the valley of the Hudson alone. OLDE

ULSTER has often spoken of the service this great and powerful confederacy had rendered the people of the Esopus when the Indians of the Esopus gave trouble. Former numbers have told of their influence in securing the captive women and children and on other occasions. It were well to digress long enough to make a fuller recognition. There was rarely a negotiation with the tribes of the Hudson at which Iroquois were not present.

“The Five Nations, as they were called, were the five tribes of Central New York,—the Mohawks, the Oneidas, the Onondagas, the Cayugas and the Senecas. They called themselves ‘the People of the Long House.’ In their figurative speech the Mohawks guarded the eastern door at Tribe’s Hill on the Mohawk river while the Senecas kept the western door at Geneseo on the Genesee. At Onondaga Hill the warriors of that tribe kept the central council fires always burning. In 1712 the Tuscaroras came from the Carolinas and united with them and they became the Six Nations.

“In 1618 the Dutch at Albany under Jacob Eelkens made a treaty with them at what is now Norman’s Kill but known to the Indians as ‘the Vale of Tawasentha.’ This treaty remained unbroken until the Indians met the problem of the Revolutionary War and unfortunately took the sides of the British, except the Oneidas who were friends of the Americans because of the influence of the missionary among them the Reverend Samuel Kirkland. That treaty with Eelkens was always fondly alluded to by the Iroquois as ‘The Silver Covenant Chain.’ Students of our colonial history find old documents full of allusions to that chain on the part of these warriors whenever they spoke at conferences. We find Indians on such occasions from as far east as New Hampshire; as far south as South Carolina and as far west as Illinois meeting in these conferences before the Revolution and asking to be bound, also, with this silver covenant chain. It kept the French in Canada from extending their territory over what is now the eastern part of the United States and finally secured to England the expulsion of the French from Canada.

“The power of the Iroquois arose after the discovery of America by Columbus. Into a rude confederacy these five tribes united themselves. They were not the largest of the tribes of North American Indians. But they were strong, virile men. They grew in time to dominate the whole North American continent and finally fell because they mixed them-

selves in the Revolution, a war which did not concern them and a strife which their wisest chieftains, as Big Tree, advised them to have nothing to do with. The British led them into the battle of Oriskany where hundreds of them were slaughtered; this led them to seek revenge at Cherry Valley, Wyoming, Fantine Kill, Minisink and elsewhere, and this led to Sullivan's expedition and the breaking down of the confederacy.

"The power and the dread of the Iroquois in the days when they dominated the Indian tribes of the United States has been fittingly set forth in the words of the poet, Alfred B. Street, in lines school boys knew fifty years ago:

"The fierce Adirondacs had fled from their wrath,
The Hurons been swept from their merciless path;
Around, the Ottawas, like leaves, had been strewn,
And the lake of the Eries struck silent and lone.
The Lenape, lords once of valley and hill,
Made women, bent low at their conqueror's will.
By the far Mississippi, the Illini shrank,
When the trail of the TORTOISE was seen on the bank;
On the hills of New England the Pequod turned pale;
When the howl of the WOLF swelled at night on the gale
And the Cherokee shook in his green, smiling bowers
When the foot of the BEAR stamped his carpet of flowers."

*The tortoise, wolf and bear being the names of the different clans or families.

"We would remark before we return to our narrative that the haughtiness of these Indian warriors rankled in the bosoms of those over whom they dominated. One of the causes of the uprising of the Esopus Indians in 1663, after they had promised to keep the peace, is given in an old document as that a delegation of these supercilious warriors had passed through the villages of the Esopus Indians on its way to the southern tribes and the disdainful Iroquois had noticed not an Esopus warrior but had strode along with eyes directly in front as they passed. Such contempt was more than they could bear.

"We will return to the narrative of events. During all the troubles with the Indians the people at the Esopus had relied upon the counsel of Captain Thomas Chambers. Had he but had his way in negotiating with them it is probable that he would have proved as politic and shrewd as Arendt van Corlaer and Peter Schuyler at Albany and instead of the Esopus Indians becoming the enemies of the settlers they might have been as fast friends of them as the settlers at Albany became of the Iroquois. But they were not and the blame did not rest upon Chambers.

“He was ambitious. He had been with the van Rensselaers and their wide domains and landed estate had aroused his determination to become the possessor of a like relation to the development of the Esopus. Manorial rights and possessions gave the owner of them in England a position that was enviable. The miles of spreading farms placed van Rensselaer in similar relations up the Hudson. He would occupy that relation to the Esopus. Esopus had become the Egypt of the colony and was feeding it not only, but its corn and wheat were the provision of West Indies. During this year of 1672 twenty-five thousand schepels of corn had been raised on the lowlands of the Esopus.

“On the 16th of October of this year his lands at the Esopus were erected into a manor by patent and he became Lord of the Manor of Fox Hall. His patent is thus worded:

“A PRIVILEGE” GRANTED TO CAPT THOMAS CHAMBERS, FOR YE ERECTING
FFOX HALL INTO A MANNOR.

“*Francis Lovelace* Esqr &c: Whereas Capt. *Thomas Chambers* Justice of Peace at *Esopus* hath been an ancient Inhabitt in those parts, where hee hath done signall & notable Service in the time of the warrs against the Indiyans, & having by his Industry in the time of Peace acquired a considerable Estate, of which hee now stands possest, Amongst the rest having a Mansion house not farr from the Towne of *Kingston* commonly called *ffox Hall*, with a great Tract of Land thereunto belonging, wch said House is made defensible against any sudden Incursion of ye Indiyans or others; In acknowldgmt of the Services heretofore done by the Capt. *Thomas Chambers*, & in part of recompence thereof, I have thought fitt to Erect the said Mansion house called *ffox Hall* & Land belonging to it into a Mannor to be known by ye name of the Mannor of *ffox Hall*, the wch shall for the time to come bee held, deemed, reputed, taken, & bee, an entire infranchized Mannor of it selfe, and shall allways from time to time have, hold, & enjoy like & equall priviledges with other Mannors within the Governmt, & shall in noe manner or anywise bee under the Rule, Ord^r or Direction of any Towne Court, but by the Generall Cort of Assizes, or from time to time ye said Capt. *Chambers* shall receive Ord^{rs} or Directions from ye Govern^r & his Councill.

“Given under my hand & Seale at *ffort James* in *New York* this 16th day of Octob^r in ye 24th yeare of Maties Reigne, Annoque Domini 1672.”

“The manor of Fox Hall lay to the north of the present city of Kingston and included the land latterly known as the Van Leuven and Kiersted farms. But its bounds were much greater than these. Chambers’ tract extended to Rondout where he was buried with his family.

“Governnor Thomas Dongan issued a new patent in 1686 confirming this of Governor Lovelace in which he detailed the manorial rights of Chambers and added one hundred acres to

his domain. He then 'allowed him one leet court and court baron.' By the leet court, which was a court of record, and was held twice a year, he could try and punish misdemeanors. The court baron was for civil cases. Having no children Thomas Chambers adopted a child of his wife, entailed the property and made him heir on condition he assumed his name. But the heirs of that son broke the entail, divided the estate and early in the last century it passed from the family. Fox Hall is but a memory to-day, the site of the manor house is in dispute, the Lord of the Manor lies in an unmarked grave, the records of the leet court are lost and the sterling services the laird rendered the infant settlement have to be searched for among the dusty documents of the past."

As stated in this article, Thomas Chambers died childless and though his adopted son was called the second Lord of the Manor, it was by courtesy only, for the Manor was never confirmed or in any way granted to him by Royal authority, so his descendants may not be recognised under the rules and regulations of our Order as eligible to membership therein.

THE MANOR OF CASSILTOWN

This Manor was granted to John Palmer by Governor Dongan March 31, 1687. It consisted of lands on the north side of Staten Island and also a "Great Island of Salt Meadow near the fresh Hills over against Long Neck."

This grant was however conveyed by the grantee, very shortly after its inception, to Governor Dongan, as appears from a letter, dated May 15, 1920, written to your President by the Secretary of The Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences, wherein the writer, after some preliminary remarks, states "In brief I may say that the patent for the manor of Cassiltowne was granted to John Palmer in 1687, but conveyed by him to Governor Dongan a fortnight later. Dongan built his manor house in 1688 and it stood until burned in 1878. Of Palmer no trace remains except the name 'Palmer's Run' applied to a creek."

Although the writer of the above mentioned letter speaks of the house built by the Governor as a "Manor House," there is no record yet found, that he claimed to be by virtue of this purchase a "Lord of the Manor." Hence we may conclude that when Palmer sold the Manor of Cassiltown, it thereby ceased to exist as a Manor and is of no further interest to our Order.

THE MANOR OF FLETCHER

This Manor, which deserves but brief attention, would not have been mentioned, had it not been identified by Edward Hagaman Hall, Esq., L.H.D., as what is called "Fishers Manor" on Colden's Map of Manors.

It lay in Orange County, N. Y., and was granted September 20, 1694, by William and Mary through "Benjamin Fletcher our Captain General and Governor in Chief" to Captain John Evans "Commander of our Royal frigate the Richmond "

However by Chapter 79 of the Laws of the Colony, "Passed May 16, 1699" this grant was revoked and annulled and therefore is not to be considered further.

THE MANOR OF BENTLEY

The account of this Manor has been reserved until the last, though the date of its grant was previous to that of the Fletcher Manor. It was granted May 6, 1687, by Governor Dongan to Captain Christopher Billopp of the ship "Bentley" and consisted of lands on the West side of Staten Island.

The following report to "The Billopp House Committee" by its chairman, the late Ira K. Morris is herein reprinted by permission of his executor Cornelius G. Kolff, Esq.,

"THE PRESERVATION OF THE OLD BILLOPP HOUSE

"EMBRACING AN OUTLINE HISTORY OF THE PREMISES, AS WELL AS THOSE WHO HAVE FROM TIME TO TIME OCCUPIED THEM—ITS PRESENT AND FUTURE.

"It is considerably more than a year since the committee was appointed by this Association to ascertain if some provision could be made for the preservation of the Old Billopp House, and as so much time has elapsed, it may be proper to state that the committee has not been idle, but has done all within its power to perform its duty. Repeatedly the executors of the late General Lloyd Aspinwall were visited only to feel each time more forcibly the effects of 'the law's delay.' Arrangements were made to secure proper legislation, provided we had the privilege to purchase the premises. The chief obstacle, one of the executors informed us, was, that while we desired to purchase only the Old Manor House and the plot of ground upon which it stands, they wanted to sell all the property to one purchaser, in order to close up the estate. Another obstacle,

as we thought at the time, was, that a land company had been organized and had made the executors an offer which they were giving their earnest consideration. Yet we did not give the matter up; we merely waited for future developments. The company to which we refer finally made the purchase, and there is every reason to believe that its members have caught the spirit of this Association, and are going to carry out our original programme. It seems at this time to be a matter of congratulation that the Bentley Manor Company has been able to purchase the valuable property, for we can now rest assured that the historical 'battle monument,' as it has been termed, will be jealously guarded and preserved.

"As we cross the threshold of this ancient structure, our minds wander back through the dim avenues of history, and we recall so much that has aided not only to form the early records of our county, but to lay the very foundation of the nation. We go back to that memorable Summer day when the Island woodlands were clothed in their richest verdure, and the winding trails of the Indian lay amid bowers of wild flowers, now and then leading up to an isolated Holland cottage or a rude cluster of wigwams. We glance across the quiet bay, glistening beneath the noonday sun, and we behold a small sailing vessel, after a tempestuous voyage of many weeks, drawing near to the port at the rude little hamlet of Perth Amboy. We witness, too, the dissensions and the clashing among men which sectional strife and personal interests have caused, until at last a half-fledged monarch places upon it all the strong hand of authority. We see the Duke of York, long before he drew near to the fulfilment of his cherished day dream of ascending the throne of England as King James the Second, deciding the fate of Staten Island; and this old house stands here today as a monument to the memory of that event. Up to the year 1668 it was a disputed question whether Staten Island belonged to New York or New Jersey, and, tired of the annoyance that this fact gave, the Duke decided that all islands lying in the harbor of New York which could be circumnavigated in twenty-four hours should remain in his jurisdiction, otherwise to belong to New Jersey.

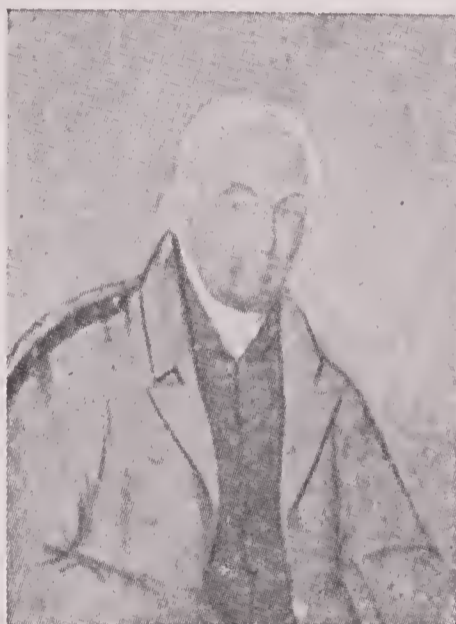
"Captain Christopher Billopp, the commander of the little vessel of which we have spoken, undertook, the task and was successful. In consideration of this service, the Duke presented Captain Billopp with a tract of land containing 1,163 acres. There and then he built this old house, and named it the 'Manor of Bentley,' in honor of the vessel which had performed the

great task. Most of the material was gathered on the plantation; but the cement, which holds the great thick walls together so firmly, came from England and the bricks from Belgium. Captain Billopp set to work to build the house shortly after he got possession of the land, but he did not receive his deed for the property until 1687. Shortly after his location on the Island he married a sister of Thomas Farmer, who was a Judge of this county in 1714, and afterward removed to Perth Amboy, where he became a prominent figure in the history of New Jersey. In 1674 a militia company was organized, by order of the King, and Billopp was appointed its second lieutenant. In 1677, while residing in this house, he was appointed commander and sub-collector for New York on Delaware bay and river. He is charged with having 'misconducted' himself by making 'extravagant speeches in public,' which were probably offensive to Governor Andros, who deprived him of his military commission. Billopp then retired to his plantation, 'there to brood over the ingratitude of princes,' as we have witnessed many another doing since Richmond became the 'banner county' of the Empire State. He lived in retirement for two years, and we next hear of him joining his fellow citizens in preferring charges against his old persecutor, Governor Andros.

"On the 22d of March, 1712, a little baby girl came to the home of the Billopps. They called her Eugenia. She was tenderly reared within these walls, but before she grew to womanhood must have learned only too well the bitter stings of sorrow. We have only tradition now to tell us that her father started to return to England in his little ship, but was never heard from again!

"Eugenia married her cousin, Thomas Farmer, and to please those who desired to perpetuate the family name assumed it along with the property, and settled down for life in the Old Billopp House. As Thomas Farmer Billopp he is well known to all readers of history. He became a prominent citizen and held various military and civil offices. It is known that they had two children. The younger, Sallie, married Alexander Ross, of New Jersey, in 1775. The elder, a son, born in 1734, became the famous Colonel Christopher Billopp of the Revolutionary war. Thomas and Eugenia died comparatively young, and were buried in the family grave yard near their old home. It is no exaggeration to say that Christopher Billopp, when even a young man, rose to the rank of leader of men and measures in Richmond County. He was repeatedly

in the State councils and held various offices in the county. We once saw an original order issued by him, at his office in Richmond Village, signed 'Christopher Billopp, Chief of Police of Richmond County.' That was about 1750. He raised and commanded a regiment of 'native loyalists' and was commissioned Colonel by George the Third. His first wife, by whom two daughters were born, is unknown; but his second wife was Jane Seaman, daughter of Judge Benjamin Seaman, of Marshland (now Green Ridge), and the old house in which the marriage ceremony was held was demolished four or five years since. It stood by the Fresh Kill road on Mr. George W. White's dairy farm. We once chatted with an aged colored woman who informed us that her mother was a slave in the



LIEUTENANT-COLONEL CHRISTOPHER BILLOPP

Seaman family, and witnessed the marriage ceremony. Time does not permit us now to review the long and interesting record of this noted man. Suffice it to say, he was true to his convictions in supporting the parent government, and in this old home of his ancestors entertained many distinguished men in the service of the Crown. After the war, he left Staten Island with a portion of his family, and in 1783, with fifty-four other Royalists, petitioned Sir Guy Carleton for extensive grants of land in Nova Scotia. He soon went to New Brunswick and became prominent in the affairs of that province. He was a member of the House of Assembly, the Council, and on the death of Governor Smythe, in 1823, he claimed the Presidency of the government, and issued his proclamation accordingly;

but the Honorable Ward Chipman was a competitor for the positions, and was sworn into office.

“Colonel Billopp died at St. John, N. B., in 1827, being then in his ninety-third year. His wife, twenty years his junior, died in the same city in 1802, aged forty-eight years. They had three sons—John, Willett and Thomas. They had a dry goods store on Broadway, New York City, in the vicinity of Trinity Church. John never married but fell a victim of yellow fever at the time the city was scourged by that terrible disease. Thomas married a Miss Moore, of Newtown, L. I., survived the fever, failed in business, joined the expedition of the celebrated Miranda, in which he received an appointment as captain, and was taken prisoner by the Spaniards and afterward executed. There were four daughters by the second wife. Louisa married John Wallace, Esq., surveyor of the customs. Mary married the Rev. Archdeacon Willis, of Nova Scotia, and died in Halifax in 1834, aged forty-three years. Jane became the wife of the Hon. William Black, of St. John, and died in 1836. Ann, the youngest daughter, never married. It is said by old residents of the Island that she was the last of the family to visit the dear old homestead. She went there in 1824 and gathered some flowers from an old trumpet creeper vine that was growing on the house, and some nuts and wild cherries from trees that were growing in the burial plot, and took them with her to her father in Nova Scotia. It is said that on beholding them the heart of the old Colonel melted and he wept like a child.

“The Billopp estate was confiscated at the close of the Revolution, and was sold by Isaac Stoutenburg and Philip Van Courtland, Commissioners of Forfeitures for the Southern District of New York. The sale, made on July 16th, 1784, was recorded as follows:

“Sold to Thomas McFarren, of the city of New York, merchant, for the sum of four thousand six hundred and ninety-five pounds Lawful Money of the said state—All that certain Tract or parcel of Land situate Lying and being in the County of Richmond and Manor of Bentley, *Bounded* Southerly by the Bay or water called Prince’s Bay, westerly by the river that runs between the said Land and Amboy Northerly partly by the Land of Jacob Reckhow and partly by the road and Easterly partly by the road and partly by the Bay, Containing Eight hundred and fifty acres and half an acre and which said tract is divided into the several following Farms and Lots of Land—three hundred and seventy-three acres thereof in possession of Samuel Ward—Two hundred Acres in the possession of Albert Ryckman, Fifty-three acres in the possession of John Manner—Fifty-three acres in the possession of Andrew Prior—Twenty-five acres in the possession of

James Churchward, sixty-seven acres and a half acre in the possession of Benjamin Drake—Twenty-three acres and a half acre in the possession of Joseph Totten—Eleven acres and a half acre in the possession of Jacob Reckhow—Together with all the Buildings and Improvements thereon Erected and made Forfeited to and Vested in the People of this state by the Attainer of Christopher Billopp late of the County of Richmond Esquire.”

“There is a lamentable incident in connection with the history of these premises. At the time that the property passed into the possession of the Aspinwalls the sacred ground of the old grave yard was heartlessly trespassed upon, and the mouldering bones of three generations of the Billopps—together with those of many a faithful old slave, and perchance some friendly Indians—were taken from their long resting place and carried away to a neighboring garden. The old brown stones, too, that had long marked the silent homes of the dead were carried away, and the little plot which for nearly two centuries had held the mortal remains of dear ones was thrown open to the commons. That such an act should have been committed in ‘our day’ is a sad reflection upon our boasted civilization, and in the light of history resolves itself into an actual crime.

Forty-three years ago, while that part of the property originally purchased by the Wards belonged to a Mr. Parkinson, who had purchased it in 1836, Mr. Richard Christopher with his wife moved into the old house. There they have lived ever since. When the Bentley Manor Company took possession of the property, they permitted Mr. Christopher and his aged wife to remain, and he is employed to show the visitors through the rooms and explain to them what he knows about the old house and the noted people who have made it their home. The kind old man, whose hair is silvered with age, evidently feels very proud of his responsible position and performs his task to the best of his ability.

“Accompanied by the general manager of the Bentley Manor Company, Mr. Richard S. Satterlee, we visited the house on Saturday last, (December 6th), and, with Mr. Christopher as guide, we went through every room and closet within it. There is the large hall in the centre of the building, apparently in its pristine condition. Mr. Satterlee has fitted up a little desk, where he keeps a register, and, on glancing over its pages we find the names of visitors from California, Pennsylvania, New York, Connecticut, Florida, Rhode Island, Wyoming, Illinois, Washington, Michigan, and so on. Resting against the wall, on the right of the entrance, are the two famous brown head-

stones that have been familiar to every generation of Staten Islanders for considerably over a century. One stone had on it the old fashioned death's-head and is badly nicked and bears this inscription: 'Here lies ye body of Thomas Billopp, Esq., ye son of Thomas Farmer, Esq., Dec'd April ye 2d, 1750, in ye 39th year of his age.' The other is badly broken and several of the pieces are lost. About eight years ago, in company with Mr. Frederic, W. Kost, the artist, the writer gathered up the fragments of this stone, which we found lying scattered around



GRAVE OF THOMAS BILLOPP

the yard, and placed them together, hoping that some day we would have authority to remove them for safe keeping. But Mr. Satterlee has cemented the pieces together, placed them on some boards and the stone once more stands beside its old companion. It bears this inscription: 'Here lies Eugenia, ye wife of Thomas Billopp, aged 23 years, Dec'd November ye 22d, 1735.' The old stones are a matter of much historical importance to all who visit the house, and are the indisputable proof-links in the genealogy of the Billopps.

“We next visited the old kitchen. There is the great fire place, really large enough for half a dozen men to stand in at a time, while at its back is the huge oven of which so much has been written. And there, too, it is remarkable to state, is the original iron trammel, and hanging to which are all the hooks and chains that were placed there more than two centuries ago. Above this, on the thick walls of the chimney, are the hooks on which, in days of yore, they used to hang their meat for smoking. The kitchen is in the low part, which also contains a sitting and dining room. There is a unique corner cupboard in the kitchen which formerly stood in one of the large front rooms. It bears evidence of once having been a receptacle for silver and other valuable wares.

“A curiosity is the inside stairway to the basement. Little and big steps lead at right angles down into one of the most unique spots imaginable. Above are the great, whiteoak beams, so hard that it seems impossible to penetrate them with a knife blade, and they rest on a foundation of huge stones about four feet in thickness, and held together by a flint-like cement. In this old basement is laid one of the scenes in ‘The Water Witch,’ one of Fennimore Cooper’s novels. The floor is of brick, and close beside the main entrance is a fire-place that compares with the one in the kitchen. This basement, there is every reason to believe, was originally used as a kitchen. In the rear of it—or rather, on the North side—is located a strange, dungeon-like cellar, which, tradition tells us, was used for imprisoning many a patriot of the Revolution, while the Billopp House was a British outpost. The theory has been advanced for many years that there was a secret subway from the basement down to the river, about two hundred yards distant. After the investigation on Saturday in ‘the dungeon,’ we think it is but fair to believe this theory. ‘Soundings’ taken in various parts of the floor go to prove that there is a hollow place underneath.

“The room on the right of the entrance to the main hall is undoubtedly the old parlor. It is the room, we believe, in which the famous interview was held between Lord Howe and John Adams, Benjamin Franklin and Edward Rutledge, shortly after the battle of Long Island. Lord Howe desired to dictate terms of peace, and the Continental Congress had appointed those men to learn what he had to say. Shortly after the capture of Colonel Billopp, and during his imprisonment in the military jail at Burlington, N. J., his family removed from the

old house, never to return. From that date on to the evacuation of the Island by the British it was used as a barrack by General Howe's troops. It soon became very filthy, and on this occasion the room in which the interview was held was cleansed by order of the post commander, presumably Lieutenant-Colonel Wallace, of Colonel Billopp's regiment. Along the sloping lawn in front of the house long lines of troops that formed the very flower of the English army were drawn, between which the distinguished commander escorted his no less distinguished guests.



HISTORIC INTERVIEW AT THE BILLOPP HOUSE

We need not here repeat the events of this memorable hour though it may have aided to form one of the most interesting pages in American history. We all know that Lord Howe's terms were rejected. Writing of the event many years afterward, the late G. P. Disosway said:

“The momentous interview at the Old Billopp House, between the old world and the new, was an event regarded with extreme solicitude by the people of both at that day. With the developments of time, it rises into the grandeur of a great battle-point and monument of history.’ The interview was brief. There was no agreement, no reconciliation. Independence was maintained. The result was limned by the hand of God, and is seen

in the progress of a continent and the achievements of century all over the world.' The room is now totally devoid of furniture, save two old portrait paintings of Joseph Christopher and his wife, who were the host and hostess of old Richmond County Hall, in Richmond Village, about a half a century ago. The ancient fireplace is used to warm the welcome visitors, and the 'back-logs' crackle and snap as of yore. The mantle is well covered with relics which Mr. Satterlee has collected about the premises, among which are bullets and various Indian implements. During a recent reception given to the public in this room several valuable relics were carried away. The rude closet in one corner of this room is in itself worthy of a visit.

"On the opposite side of the hall is what is generally believed to have been the dining room during the times of the Billopps. It was originally a very large room, but was divided by Mr. Christopher. One can easily picture in his mind some of the gay banquets that have been given in this old room; can imagine the powdered wigs and rich costumes gathered together in those old days at Bentley. What a charm they add to the willing imagination as the scenes come back to us only in the faded glory that serves to enchant the memory of the past.

"On the second floor the rooms are naked and empty. There have evidently been no material changes in them during the two long centuries. But they are indeed a study within themselves. How many a soul has 'dreampt through the curtain'd sleep' in those old rooms that now sleep a deeper slumber in the ground! Plain, simple, rich with age and embellished with history—that's all that can be said of them here. There were originally three rooms on the second floor, but there are four now.

"The old garret—shades of boyhood, what reveries fill the mind up there! The strong whiteoak beams, morticed and braced in every direction, hard and firm with age, covered with great, long shingles that were undoubtedly the first to form the roof—how many have they protected from the sun, the wind and the rain! The old 'slave quarters' on the North end of the floor were torn away many years ago, and the garret is now one large room. For at least one hundred and fifty years the slaves of the Billopps, the Wards, and other masters slept in that old garret. During all that period Westfield contained more slaves than any other town in the county, and as the lord of the Manor of Bentley was always considered its leading as well as its wealthiest citizen, there is no room for doubt that the number

of slaves there exceeded that of any other property holder on Staten Island. The roof is badly out of repair, and the snow and rain beat through in many places. That will no doubt be looked after by the enterprising gentlemen into whose hands the old house has fortunately fallen. Among the superstitious there is an ill-founded tradition that a murder was committed in this garret some time prior to the Revolution; but as there is nothing in the Court records to substantiate the statement, we can put it down as one of those flimsy myths that almost always hover over the moss-covered walls of old buildings of this class.

“The old house will need many repairs soon. The old doors and windows that were in service at the commencement are still there, but they are greatly worn, and in many places about the house there are evidences of the devastation and ruin of moth and rust.

“Differing from the rule prevailing in recent years, a warm welcome greets the visitor nowadays. A cordial invitation is extended to everybody the wide world over. And it is a matter of congratulation that the general manager of the company, Mr. Richard S. Satterlee, is a gentleman of education and refinement, full of veneration for the old house and its history, enthusiastic in the collection and preservation of relics pertaining to it, and is determined to do his part to keep the ancient landmark for the delight and entertainment of even generations yet to come.

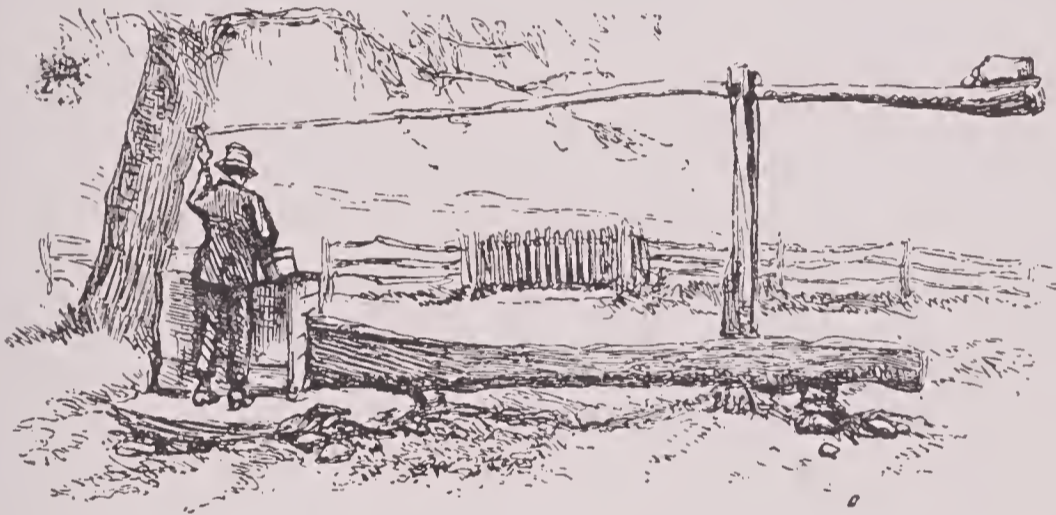
“In an attempt to place the grounds surrounding the house in good order, evidences have been discovered to substantiate the theory that it once stood in the centre of a park. On both the North and South sides the foundations of stone walls that enclosed it were found a few days since. During the coming Spring the grounds will be neatly arranged. The well, with its ‘old oaken bucket’ and ‘sweep’ will be preserved with care. Its sparkling water and unique arrangement throughout will add a real charm to the scene.

“The Bentley Manor Company has had the property surveyed and laid out with regard to convenience of access, advantageous sites for residences and improved methods of drainage. The property is divided into blocks of various shapes and sizes. The company offers the property for sale for purposes of residence only.

“The land will be sold in plots, containing any number of lots, under such restrictions as will secure it from the intro-

duction of any objectionable tenants or features. However, land will not be sold for speculation, and only those who intend to build will be encouraged to come. The character of the houses built will be controlled to a certain extent in so much as on certain streets and avenues single lots will not be sold, and any one purchasing in those localities will be expected to erect a house the minimum value of which shall be in keeping with the situation and neighboring houses. No liquor will be sold on the premises, and nuisances of all kinds will be excluded by the terms of the deed.

“So, after all, the Association need not feel that its work has been in vain. The effort to preserve the old house was a very laudable one, and we should feel thankful that while the task



OLD WELL AT THE BILLOPP HOUSE

was not performed by our hands it will be done by others, and will be done well.”

A second account of this Manor, also included through the courtesy of Mr. Kolff, is taken from his invitation as President to the Members of The Staten Island Chamber of Commerce, in which is this description of the Billopp House.

“Near the most southerly point of the State of New York, facing the Staten Island and Sound and on its opposite shore, the City of Perth Amboy, stands the historic Billopp House. It is a landmark which is dear to the hearts of all those who take an interest in the history of our country and particularly the history of the State of New York and Staten Island.

“It was built several hundred years ago on land given Christopher Billopp by the Duke of York as a reward for having saved

Staten Island for the Duke of York and consequently for the State of New York, by sailing around it in his famous sloop, the Bentley, in less than twenty-four hours.

“During revolutionary times, it became famous as the place of rendezvous of General Howe, representing the British Government, and Benjamin Franklin, Edward Rutledge and John Adams, representing the Continental Congress at Philadelphia, in its effort to establish peace between the American colonies and Great Britain.

“During the strife between the revolting colonies and England it was occupied by a descendant of the original Billopp, Col. Christopher Billopp, an officer in the British Army, who was made prisoner by dare-devil American soldiers who stole across the sound in boats at night and made him a prisoner in his own house, conveyed him safely across the sound in a boat and sent him as a much prized prisoner to Trenton.

“The place is full of historic interest. Frequent futile efforts have been made to pass legislation at Albany to secure it as a historic landmark.

“To Borough President Van Name falls the honor of having at last succeeded in preserving this famous old building by embracing it within the lines of the New South Side Boulevard. It is therefore hoped that this historic old home will forever be retained for those worshipping at the shrine of American patriotism.”

For the third account of the Manor of Bentley we are greatly indebted to the Editor of “Harper’s New Monthly Magazine” through whose kind permission, the following quotation is taken from an article entitled “A Spring Jaunt in Staten Island” as it appeared in the number of the Magazine for April 1878.

“Then we drove to Tottenville, the southwestern extremity of the island, and a very pretty little town it is; but the inhabitants that we met were given to a rashness of statement that caused us no little trouble. We were told that the old Billopp house, which we were searching for, was at the bottom of a certain street; at the bottom of that street we were told that it was at the top; at the top we were told to follow a certain hill: and an hour was lost through these unprovoked prevarications. At last, and in despair, we asked for directions from a venerable-looking old boy in a garden. ‘Ah, yes, the Billopp house!’ he said, and added, as though it was a particularly good joke, worthy of great emphasis, ‘*You* call it the Billopp house, some calls it the Bently house, and *I* call it the old *stone* house.’

He repeated this with much unction, and shook his head with an imbecile sort of satisfaction. This thing could not last forever, however, and we had conspired to make a hostage of some one, who should not be released until he delivered us at the Billopp house, when the patriarch's intelligence experienced a lucid interval, and he put us on the right path.

"The Billopp house is one of the oldest buildings on the island. It is built of stone, on a bowery slope that overlooks the confluence of the Raritan and the Staten Island Sound. The walls are two or three feet thick, and the gable roof is preposterously high and steep. Its first owner was Christopher Billopp, and its history is exceedingly interesting. When the Duke of York had conveyed New Jersey to Berkley Carteret, a question



was raised as to whether Staten Island was included in the grant, and to settle the matter it was decided that all islands in the bay or harbor should belong to New York if they could be circumnavigated in twenty-four hours. Christopher Billopp, who owned a small ship called the *Bently*, sailed around Staten Island in that time, and the duke gave him the tract of land, on part of which the house is built, in reward for his services. Another story states that Billopp was rewarded by the land for gallant service in a naval action.

"It was in this old homestead that Franklin, Adams, and Edward Rutledge, of South Carolina, assembled to negotiate peace with Lord Howe after the battle of Long Island. The

meeting lasted four hours, and the Americans, who had been appointed by Congress, would not consent to any treaty that was not based on the acknowledged independence of the colonies. Here, too, Billopp entertained various distinguished guests, including Sir Henry Clinton, General Robertson, General Knyphausen, Major André, and others. He had a pretty wife, and was celebrated for his hospitality, but he subsequently fared roughly at the hands of the patriots, and his property was confiscated.



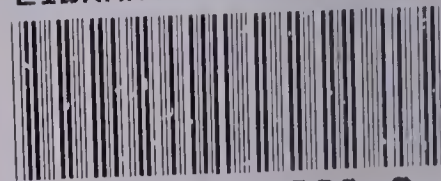
“From Tottenville we returned to the city, each of the artists avowing his intention to come back again at a future day in search of more of the abundant picturesque materials, of which they carried numerous graphic evidences in their books.”

From what we now know of the above mentioned Manors, the following conclusions may be drawn, viz.:

That the grantee of the Manor of Fordham never became a “Lord of the Manor” in the true sense of the term, that the grantee of the Sophy Manor was dispossessed and surrendered his rights and position as a “Lord of the Manor,” that the Lord of the Manor of Fox Hall died childless and that therefore there are none now to represent him or his Manor, that the

Manor of Cassiltown was sold by its grantee almost immediately after it was granted to him and consequently ceased to exist as a Manor, that the grant of the Manor of Fletcher was revoked and annulled and finally that of the descendants of all of the grantees of the Manors to which our attention has been called in this address, those of Captain Billopp of the Manor of Bentley, alone are eligible to membership in our Order.

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